DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 339 990 CS 010 751

AUTHOR Rogers, Sue F.
TITLE Practicum in Reading Placements for Preservice Teachers.
PUB DATE Nov 90
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the College Reading Association (34th, Nashville, TN, November 2-4, 1990).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College School Cooperation; Educational Research; Higher Education; *Preservice Teacher Education; Primary Education; *Public Schools; *Reading Centers; *Reading Teachers; *Student Teaching; Teaching Experience
IDENTIFIERS Virginia

ABSTRACT

A study investigated whether a college reading center was superior to a local public school as a practicum site for developing teachers of literacy. Of 17 undergraduate preservice teachers enrolled in a practicum in a reading field placement course, 10 were placed in the college reading center and 7 in a primary level public school. The preservice teachers in each placement self-evaluated the practicum experience. The following semester, the same preservice teachers were placed in student teaching and evaluated by their college supervisor on teaching literacy in the classroom. The preservice teachers' self-evaluations and their student teacher supervisor's evaluations were statistically analyzed. Results indicated that the college reading center practicum placement was not superior to the public school placement for teacher preparation in literacy. (Four tables of data are included.) (Author/SR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED339990

PRACTICUM IN READING PLACEMENTS FOR PRESERVICE TEACHERS

Sue F. Rogers

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

CS010751

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sue F. Rogers

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PRACTICUM IN READING PLACEMENTS FOR PRESERVICE TEACHERS

by
SUE F. ROGERS, ED.D.
AVERETT COLLEGE

ABSTRACT

Undergraduate preservice teachers enrolled in a Practicum in Reading field placement course were divided into two groups--one for placement in the College Reading Center and the other in a public school to see if there was an indication that the Center was superior for developing teachers of literacy. The preservice teachers in each placement self-evaluated the practicum experience. The following semester, the same preservice teachers were placed in student teaching and evaluated by their college supervisor on teaching literacy in the classroom. The preservice teachers' self-evaluations and their student teacher supervisor's evaluations were statistically analyzed. The study indicated that the Reading Center Practicum placement was not superior to the public school placement in developing teachers of literacy. Implications are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

During the late 1980's educational reform movement in Virginia, college/university teacher education programs were required to begin offering additional field placements for preservice teachers (Lemmon, 1986). At the college where I teach, one of the main field experiences added to the elementary education curriculum was a Practicum in Reading, which previously had been an elective for elementary majors. Since our Education Department had a Reading Center on campus, the obvious placement choice for this additional

field experience was in the Center. However, as the instructor of the Practicum, I was unsure if this was the best placement for optimal preparation for teachers of literacy. I asked myself: would a public school setting be better? Also, I was aware of the high costs of running a reading center on campus in a time of national and state budget cuts and wondered if the Center's advantages for teacher education students were beneficial enough to outweigh the costs. Of course, I felt they were! But, I wanted the benefit of support more substantial than my prejudicial emotions! Hence, I took a trip to the campus library hoping for some answers. However, it soon became obvious that locating answers to my questions was going to take more than mere literature perusal. But when and how was I to get the information needed?

Background. At my college, prior to the Practicum in Reading course, preservice elementary teachers complete one course in the teaching of literacy entitled "Reading and Language Development." Another course, "Diagnosis and Application of Reading and Language Arts," is taken simultaneously with the Practicum. For all three reading courses, the students have the same two professors, texts

and instruction.

During the Practicum, I observe each preservice teacher diagnosing and tutoring for a minimum of four long (thirty minute) observations and two to four brief (three to ten minute) observations. In addition, I am available to students tutoring in the Reading Center before, during and following the tutoring session as well as during regular office hours. Also, all students have a weekly conference with me for discussion and approval of lesson plans prior to teaching them.

Implementation of the newly required Practicum course was Fall, 1988 and all went well, until Spring 1990--when our numbers of preservice students seeking elementary certification increased dramatically. The college reading center could accommodate only one practicum class of ten students per semester. Therefore, the class of seventeen was divided with the second section placed in the primary level public school across the street from campus. In making arrangements for this placement the same old questions and some new ones arose such as: would the Reading Center placement be superior in preparing the preservice teachers for student teaching? Would the

prospective teachers feel (as I did) that they were better prepared to student teach after completing the Center placement? Is placement in the public school setting a good solution for extra practicum classes in the future if numbers continue to be higher? If the Center placement does not appear to be a better choice of the two placements in preparing classroom teachers in assessing and teaching literacy, how will this affect the Reading Center's assessment and tutoring program? Again, in case I had missed something the first time, I returned to the literature for help.

There were some interesting studies that were helpful in developing a survey questionaire to be used later in this study (to be discussed further on in this article), but the research offered no help for my questions! One study by Moore and Harris (1986) surveyed preservice teachers' Practicum in Reading, Math, Social Studies and Science at Brigham Young University. However, the study surveyed preservice teachers' written explanations of their knowledge on teaching phonics only and was not based on the practicum's field placement experience (This study was about as close to my topic as I was going to locate in the literature!).

Another study conducted by the National Council of Teachers of English (1986) dealt with a more basic question--is the field based preservice teacher program superior to the more traditional course based one? This resulted in guidelines for use in preparing English/Language Arts teachers in essential areas of knowledge, pedagogy and attitudes. Guidelines are nice but gave no answers concerning the most effective field placement locations for developing more effective teachers of literacy.

Two studies, one conducted in Connecticut (Potter and Sjoerdsma, 1988) on developing an Elementary Education Licensing Examination and another in Illinois (Allessia, 1983), on developing a handbook for assessing preservice teachers' clinical experiences, again offered areas for preservice teachers to become adept-- knowledge of subject matter and pedagogy but did not give any information on how to select the best location for demonstrations of knowledge in these areas when in practicum placements. I had struck out! All of the above studies were related to practicum or clinical placements but were like Virginia's restructured program in that they contained some general guidelines or expressed some needs for teachers but did not study the

placement locations for better preservice teacher practica in reading.

Since the present literature did not offer my needed information, I realized that this was my opportunity to find answers to my questions. I began developing my own research study with the splitting of my Practicum class into two sections to see if the Reading Center really was a superior placement for developing teachers of literacy. The study plans included following the same teachers through their student teaching semester which immediately followed their practicum and then to note some statistical relationships between the two practicum groups. My specific purposes in conducting the study were hopefully, to find the following: 1) that the Reading Center Practicum tutors would be superior teachers of literacy when student teaching. And 2) that the Center's tutors would feel more knowledgeable in literacy teaching than the other. If these two stated purposes were indicated as truthful, then I could justify my feelings that the Center was the best site for the Practicum and worth the operating expenses.

METHOD

Subjects. Of the seventeen subjects in the divided

Practicum ten were placed in the College Reading Center and seven in a primary level public school. The disparity in group numbers was due to having to fill the Center to its full capacity of ten tutors before a second Practicum class and placement could be added to the college schedule (a college policy). The public school selected was directly across the street from the campus, so both preservice teachers and I had easy access to the off campus placement.

Procedures. The students were randomly assigned to the two classes with the last three assigned to the center so it could run at full capacity. Three variables were controlled for the student make up of the two classes: 1) nontraditional students, 2) students with children of their own and 3) students who were previously employed in teaching related work--day care worker or teacher's aid. All students had at least a 2.5 grade point average. The mean grade point average was 3.04 for the Center group and 3.08 for the public school group. My students were excited to be participating in the study as well as anxious to begin their tutoring experience.

As already stated in the background information, all students in the two Practica had the same instructions,

demonstrations and materials in class. When tutoring, each tutor used informal assessment instruments, wrote an Individual Educational Plan for her child, tutored the child for seven weeks (21 hours), reassessed the child with informal instruments and wrote a final formal report. Those in the Center conducted two parent conferences and made a phone call to the child's classroom teacher while those in the school conducted two teacher conferences and one exit conference with the school principal for a total of three parent and/or professional conferences. The major differences in the placements were: 1) Center tutors used content topics of their choice for lesson plans while the school tutors were generally given materials and assignments for lessons by the childrens' classroom teachers. 2) The Center tutoring was in two ninety minute sessions per week while the public school tutoring took place in three to five thirty to sixty minute sessions per week. 3) Parents were at the Center daily and showed visible interest in their children's work and in the tutors; classroom teachers in the school were involved and visibly interested in preservice teachers' work but parents were not involved. 4) The instructor was at the Center to observe and maintain casual interaction with both preservice teachers and children on a

daily basis while in the public school, observations and interaction with preservice teachers and children occurred an average of approximately once a week. 5) And finally, the Center is a special setting for preservice teachers and children while the public school setting is a traditional one.

Analyses. At the end of the fifth week of the seven week tutoring experience all practicum students were given the college course evaluation form. Since this study involved the students' opinions of their cognitive growth in teaching reading, and only the first two questions of this course evaluation instrument concerned this topic, they were the only responses used in this portion of the study. For these two questions the students rated their own accomplishments in the course on a scale of one to five (see Table 1 below), with one rated as "strongly disagree" and five as "strongly agree." After students completed the evaluations and sealed them in an envelop, then placed them in the Provost's Office until the semester ended. As soon as I reported grades to the college registrar, I tallied, ranked and analyzed their self-ratings with a Mann-Whitney U as this test is for use with ordinal measurements of small (under 20 in number)

randomly selected independent groups such as these.

Table 1 Questions one and two on the course evaluation were for the tutors to rate their accomplishments in the Practicum in Reading Course.

EVALUATION, 1990

Self-Rated Accomplishment

	Strongly Agree 1	2	Agree Mildly 3	4	Disagree Strongly 5	N/A 6
1. I have learned a lot.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. This course increased my interest in the subject matter.	1	2	3	4	5	6

During the following semester, fourteen of the original seventeen practicum students (eight from the Center and six from the school--the remaining three were scheduled to student teach during a later semester, after the study was completed) enrolled in student teaching at the primary elementary level. The college instructor of student teachers completed a survey (See Table 2) for each of these fourteen student teachers during the sixth and seventh weeks of their student teaching experience. I had developed the survey after reviewing the literature, hence it included

statements and questions of pedagogy and knowledge from those studies mentioned earlier (NCTE, 1986,Potter and Sjoerdsma, 1988, and Allessia, 1983). The Education Department's student teacher instructor rated each student teacher on each question or statement according to her observations in the following manner: a "1" rating was given if the statement/question was definitely observed or a "3" rating if definitely not a part of the teaching of literacy by the student teacher. If there was some indication of the statement/question addressed during the observation, the instructor gave a "2" rating. The student teacher instructor was not aware of the previous practicum placements of the student teachers. After observations were completed by the instructor, I collected the surveys, tallied, ranked and analyzed the data again utilizing the Mann-Whitney U test.

Table 2 The college instructor of student teachers completed this survey on fourteen student teachers during the sixth and seventh weeks of the student teaching experience.

STUDENT TEACHER SURVEY

BY

COLLEGE SUPERVISOR

FALL, 1990

Name of Student Teacher:

Please mark the appropriate rating for each statement below relating each statement to the teaching of reading and language development for student teacher named above.

	yes	some	no
PLANNING			
1. Planning based on students' needs.	3	2	1
2. Daily objectives are part of long range plans	3	2	1
Assessment			
3. Continuous informal reading and language assessment is part of student teacher's agenda	3	2	1
KNOWLEDGE OF SUBJECT MATTER			
4. Is knowledgeable of reading and language development and assessment in these areas.	3	2	1
PEDAGOGY			
5. Written expression activities are integrated across the curriculum daily.	3	2	1
6. Children are integrating knowledge of language (phonics, spelling, vocabulary, grammar, etc.) in their daily written assignments.	3	2	1

7. Children read or are read to for pleasure and information daily and for extended periods of time.	3	2	1
SELF-ESTEEM AND EMPOWERMENT			
8. Student teachers make daily curriculum decisions without agonizing over them.	3	2	1
9. Children are aware of their work and help set their own goals and assignments to accomplish.	3	2	1
ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT			
10. Lessons and materials are well organized.	3	2	1
11. A good system of managing a time schedule, planning, materials, grading, recording, etc. is utilized by the student teacher.	3	2	1

Results. The Mann Whitley U test for a one-tailed problem was utilized to test the null hypothesis stating that the Reading Center Practicum was not superior to the public school placement according to the preservice teachers self-rated accomplishments of the two practicum placements. At an .05 significance level test the calculated values did not reach a level of significance (See Table 3). The null hypothesis was accepted indicating that the college Reading Center was not a superior placement according to the

students' self-rated accomplishments. I was shocked!

Table 3 Results of the Mann-Whitney U Test on the self-rated accomplishments of the two Practicum groups of preservice teachers

BETWEEN VARIABLES;	SAMPLE SIZE	U	MEAN	STD DEV
A	9	29.50	22.50	7.50
B	5	15.50		

Later, when the Mann-Whitney U test was run on the data collected by the preservice teachers' college supervisor during the sixth or seventh week of the student teacher's placement in grades K-4, the results at the .05 significance level using a one-tailed test were: the values did not reach a level of significance (See Table 4)! Thus, the null hypothesis stating that the Center Practicum students did not exhibit a superior performance over those in the public school Practicum in teaching literacy during student teaching was accepted. Though still in shock, I was more prepared after the first analytical results, to accept these. In short, the results clearly indicate that the Center placement for Practicum in Reading was not superior to the public school one for teacher preparation in literacy.

Table 4 Results of the Mann-Whitney U Test on the college supervisor's ratings of two groups of practicum students the following semester when student teaching.

BETWEEN VARIABLE:	SAMPLE SIZE	U	MEAN	STD DEV
A	8	22.00	24.00	7.74597
B	6	26.00		

Discussion. This study conducted to determine if there were indications that the Reading Center Practicum placement at my college would be superior in preparing literacy teachers for student teaching to a practicum placement in a public school. For the first part of the study preservice teachers in each placement (campus center and public school) rated themselves in knowledge gained from the experience. The second part of the study took place one semester later when the college supervisor observed and rated the same preservice teachers in their sixth and seventh weeks of student teaching. Both parts of the study were put through the Mann-Whitney U test. Both parts accepted the null hypothesis indicating no significant values in a one-tail test at the .05 level of significance. Thus, the Center was

not indicated to be the superior location for a practicum by either the preservice teachers' self-ratings or by their college supervisor's ratings during their student teaching experiences in the teaching of literacy.

So, what did this mean? After much thought and many discussions with colleagues, the following implications of this study were written for the practicum placements at my college:

1) In future Practica in Reading I will consider the public schools to be a desirable location for placement of my students for the tutoring experience.

2) Since collaborative efforts between public schools and college personnel seem to be as effective when working with preservice teachers in a Practicum in Reading placement as is a college instructor only placement, perhaps students should be placed in public school settings which require less of the instructor's time in reading center details (scheduling, maintaining materials, and counseling parents) giving the instructor more time for working with preservice teachers as well as with other college and teaching responsibilities.

3) In order to define the futures of other college or

university reading center programs, further study is warranted on the benefits and values (such as benefits for children and educational or psychological research purposes) that are not identified in this study limited to one college reading center.

4) This study involved two classes of very small numbers of preservice teachers in one college. To further validate the findings, the study should be continued with preservice teachers for several years or a similar study conducted involving larger numbers of preservice teachers in a variety of Practica placements at other college/university campuses.

5) If operating costs of a reading center become burdensome then use of public school for practicum placements would be desirable.

6) This brings one more question to mind: has the time for college reading centers for teacher education purposes come to an end? Again, more study is needed in this high impact area!

This study supports trends in restructured educational programs such as Virginia's calling for more field placements of preservice teachers in the school setting as

well as encouraging more collaboration in using public school personnel in college Teacher Education Programs. This offers our teacher education program opportunities to be flexible in our future scheduling and placement of Practica in Reading and to consider collaboration with the public schools for placements desirable.

REFERENCES

Alessia, Mary and Owens, Kathleen (1983). A Handbook for Pre-Student Teaching Clinical Experiences. Elementary. Lewis University, Romesville, Illinois. Department of Education, 5-18.

Lemmon, W.L. (1986). Excellence in Education: A Plan for Virginia's Future. The report of the governor's Commission on Excellence in Education, 10.

Moore, Blaine and Harris, Bruce (1986). An Assessment of Preservice Teachers' Knowledge of Instructional Strategies for Teaching Phonics. A paper presented at the Sixty-fifth Annual meeting of the California Education Research Association, 1-14.

Guidelines for the Preparation of Teachers of English Language Arts (1986). National Council of Teachers

of English, Urbana, Illinois, 10-21.

Potter, Lance and Sjoerdsma, Ronald (1988). Elementary Education Licensure Examinations for the '90s. A paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, Louisiana, April 5-9, 1988), 1-20.